Summer 1935

Quarterly, Vol. 14 No. 4

Connecticut College

14-4

QUARTERLY

SUMMER
1935

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

The QUARTERLY

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
NEW LONDON, CONN.
SUMMER , , , 1935

VOLUME XIV NUMBER IV

THE C. C. QUARTERLY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANDY, A BUILDER

Marion Zabriskie '37

WHEN I FIRST SAW Andy, he was building a house—in physical actuality building a house. He had dug the deep cavity for its foundation. He had laid its walls with the great red-brown sandstones native to that section of Rockland County. Hand-mixed mortar joined the stones together with century-long strength. The beams around which the house was growing had been hewn with Andy's own hands. The character and almost living virility of such beams show evidence of a race greater than ours with our cold, stark girders of steel.

I looked on him as he was agilely walking up a narrow board which was inclined sharply from the ground to the ever increasing level at which he was working. He carried in his arms one of the great stones, but the full-breathed song that thundered from some mighty cavern within his iron muscled body gave no clue to the tremendous weight of his burden. The song was the "Internationale". I doubt if Andy knew of the doctrine behind the song, but he recognized the surging, not-to-be-daunted vigour in its melody, so he sang it.

The house became complete. Its immense fire-place, its low, squatty chimney, its irregular and rambling book-shelves, even its heavy, hand carved door breathed for the rugged but peaceful spirit that was Andy's own.

Later a great architect from New York bowed to its superlative unity. Andy was told of this. He merely grinned and told of a similar house he had seen his grandfather build back in his old home of Denmark. He said,

"It makes us happy to build, my grandfather and me."

Andy was not yet finished. Out of a block of some dark foreign wood that was stonelike in its hardness he

began to carve a ship. In this work Andy proved the delicacy of his skill as before he had proved its strength. Minute forms of rowers came to life-like action along the boat's gunwales. The face of the woman of the figure-head, small though it was, contained in its aspect an unfearing love for the sea.

Andy loved work. He had to work to be contented, but he refused to enter into the bonds of a steady job with a regular salary. He accepted a position as cabinet maker in an antique shop only on the condition that he could have a day off once or twice a month and take with him five or six dollars. He never asked for more time or for more money.

One Sunday he was asked to deliver a hunting board to a querulous old man who lived some miles away. The old fellow was having a connoisseur crony of his to dinner, so Sunday or no Sunday, the Hepplewhite room had to be complete.

The piece delivered, Andy was free for the day. Happy on his return trip he began to sing. He forgot that his truck was old and top-heavy. He forgot that its tires were worn to the bottom tread. A tire blew out! The truck swerved, went down an embankment, and crumpled. Andy was horribly injured. His legs and one arm were mangled beyond all power of surgical repair. However, the doctors all said that Andy would live.

The gods were kind. They knew that such an Andy could never live. With the words, "I make—" on his lips, he died.

Some people said how they loved Andy, and how sorry they were that he had not recovered. Others remained silent, but there was on their faces a sort of twisted smile.

THE SUPPORT OF THE NAVY

Margaret Waterman '36

QUITE SUDDENLY IT POURED. The gray sky concentrated all its dampness in one drenching downpour, and pedestrians, wetted out of their leisureliness, hurried, like a multi-colored school of minnows, into calmer pools of overhanging doorways. Thus I darted into a doorway so small that the one sailor, leaning against a corner seemed to fill it with the whole navy. Water ran from either side of his stiff-rimmed hat to his ears and bounced off onto his shoulders. I stood there, hunched up in the pungency of wet wool and hair, and watched a few last minnows swimming along vertically over the glistening ocean of pavement. It was as though I watched through a translucent screen, for over the edge of the doorway, the rain pouring steadily, fell in a continuous curtain, pale green in the damp Spring light.

Suddenly a strange fish swam into view: a tiny, spiney old lady in ankle-length black, borne along on the tide by a disproportionately large black umbrella; so immense was the umbrella that only her skirts showed below it.

"Animated bumbleshoot," I burbled wetly.

"Eh?" inquired the Navy, turning his head so that I could see that his right eye was hidden by a large black bandage. His good one, I noticed, as he looked down at me, was as blue and shining as a chip of old Sandwich glass.

"Wish I had that umbrell' " I replied, not daring to look as I spoke.

"Don't they have taxis?"

"Oh, yes," said I, "but not when you have only one token to get home on. I'm broke."

The Navy shook himself a little, and shifted his weight so that he was supporting a part of the door nearer me. I

had to look at him then: sandy hair, under a cap that must have been fresh and white just before the rain; russet face and a mouth of a slightly deeper shade. When I looked at him, the pointed bows of his lips pulled up in a smile. I smiled.

"Good ol' New London," he offered, "and me just in from the West Coast."

"Sub-base?"

"No, aenio-nadics—" ("aero-nautics," I translated to myself. "Must be.") "—in the Coast Guard. On the West Coast three years . . . "

"Well, you wouldn't feel properly welcomed back here if it didn't rain, would you?"

"Guess not, but I'd rather be unwelcome." His mouth pulled up again in a smile at the faint humor of his remark. "How about you?" And the good eye fixed its twinkle on the bow of my hat.

"I *like* rain," I said, twitching a stray drop from my eyebrow, "but not in good clothes—Oh, my bus—Got to go. S'long," and I splashed to the curb.

"S'long," said the sailor, "Don't drown." And when I looked back from the bus, I saw that the Navy, grinning broadly, had transferred his support to the other side of the doorway.

MINIATURE

Martha Storek '37

COLD, KIND AIR—red brick chimneys brave against a heavy sky. Yellow, yellow forsythia. Across the clean street rhythmic swooshes of a broom—an old man sweeping footprints into a tin pail. The city ash truck grinds along the curbing. I like the man at the wheel, for his eyes do not see the ashes and soiled papers—his strong arms are for that —His eyes see the high hill-road of yesterday.

Unkind air—damp winds. An old, old man stands before a fruit counter. His old voice and his little money-bag say "a five-cent grapefruit, please"—but his eyes—and they are blue, old blue—say "a half-dozen of those biggest oranges." He shambles out with his grapefruit. A little newsboy—a very little fellow—breathes hard against a baker's shop-window. His breath makes that small part of the window all frosty-like. Ten dirty pennies will buy three of these pink and green covered humps—or maybe four of those slippery chocolate rolls—or maybe ten whole ginger cookies. The little newsboy slips between big men carrying bundles and smiling women clutching hat-boxes and other boxes. — "Wuxtry, wuxtry—"

The strength of lilacs, blue stars and the shadows are all mixed up for me tonight and the air is too warm. The little boy who lives next door is sitting in a puzzled heap on his doorstep. He told me that his mother was feeling queerly, and that old granny across the way said that she would most likely die—and then he asked me did it hurt when people died and would she go away for always — There are more stars now. The moon is uncomplaining and stolid in its full hours. Life is so like a heap of queerness.

BURNING OBSESSION

Rosamond R. Brown '37

IT HAD BEEN A DAY in the spring, a day such as had bloomed and faded through the years of venerable Williamsburg innumerable times—a day filled with delicate odors, pear tree blossoms, and with echoing voices of the students. It was also the day when a group of us visited the sanitorium a short distance from college.

To Mark, that day had been twelve hours of struggle in which his wretched mind was fighting to resist a leaping flame that seemed ever about to consume him. It blinded his eyes, now tired with the constant battle to see beyond the dense blackness of his brain. His whole body avowed that the world was a vast conflagration; only his mind remained conscious of the life around him, of the coolness in the gardens, of names, of people, of his life in the sanitorium, in fact, of his sitting in his room before the open window.

For eleven years he had endured the humiliation of knowing that there were times when his mind gave way to the cravings of his body, to burn, to see the hospital turned into a great funeral pyre, for he still held the slender strand of hope that once again there would be a time when he would be victorious in the fight against the demon insanity. If just once he could survive the madness of his body which had begun eleven years ago over the death-marked fields of France, he would be forever safe. The memory of that awful night seized his mind with renewed fury. He felt the throb of the plane, and the gradual growing, leaping flames that crept upward towards his eyes. It was warm—hot—almost scorching. No—his sanity revolted in time to seize the shreds of ebbing consciousness, and he

strove to force his wandering brain to recognize familiar objects around him.

It was over. He could smell the clear freshness of the air outside his barred window and he knew that evening was slowly approaching with the sunset. The shadows of the magnolia trees were long, nearly reaching the west gate of the Asylum. To his lonely window came sounds of the day relaxing. He saw the figures of his patient house-mates, indistinct in the dying light, as they moved quietly toward the refectory. The long stretch of the dining room gave proof of chicken tonight, for the patients were sitting down to the meal with unusual vigor. Mark was continually accosted by acquaintances, but his response was always a vacant stare and an uncertain nod, until a regular giant of a man approached. He held his head like a bull about to charge, and with his deep sunk eyes searched anxiously Mark's haggard face.

"Well, Mark, you look a bit washed out tonight. Don't tell me you have been walking again. I thought that last one to Cold Springs about cured you."

Mark turned to answer the orderly's inquiry, "No, Scott, not under this sun."

It was no secret to Scott that Mark's plane had fallen in flames. Scott could not help sensing the turmoil stirring behind those burning eyes. The two men were great friends. The pathos of the eternal struggle of Mark's life appealed to Scott; and likewise, the magnetism of such strength, both physical and mental, as that of the orderly could not help but fascinate a victim of a madness such as Mark endured. Ever since the first year of Mark's confinement, the men had become almost essential to each other; Scott the rational, physical side of the balance, and Mark, the emotional, intellectual side.

Invariably, after dinner, Scott and Mark adjourned

to the card room for a game of pinochle. Because Scott went to many pains to draw Mark out of his lethargy, Mark, feeling the effort, tried to respond accordingly; but somehow he continually lost sight of the game before him, the room, and even Scott himself. For moments he felt himself completely submerged in a brilliant, burning liquid fire.

The struggle was beginning. Frantically Mark's hands flew to his forehead and strained to still the beating of his temples. Scott regarded him helplessly, for he knew instinctively that there was nothing he could do. His strength, his saneness, his manhood were nothing before this madness that strove to destroy the man, now barely a writhing bulk who sat huddled before him.

Mark's voice rose to a scream, "Leave, Scott! Either I shall win alone or I shall lose, but let me do it alone." His voice was a sob now, beseeching his friend to let him hold unstained at least a shred of self-respect. It was Mark fighting for his own life against himself, and Scott left, refusing to witness the struggle.

With every gasp, the cry in Mark to burn grew stronger. A cigarette—he wanted one. He rose, struggling for the matches; then he fell back, for he knew that he dared not light one. The thought of seeing a swaying tongue of flame dancing atop a slender match sent the blood surging to his finger tips. He was failing, his hand felt blindly out toward the match box on the sill. His strength ebbed, and the burning waxed stronger within him. His eyeballs ached; his temples beat to the throb of his racing pulse, to the swaying flame. His throat was hot, but water would not cure it. Not water—he wanted heat—fire. On the window was heat, fire, and flame—the matches! He was across the room in a stride. The matches were in his hand aglow. One agent of disaster burst forth, then another. Aided by the wind, the awful power reached out to take the curtains. In

one full sweep they were aflame. Curling and hissing like great, brilliant snakes, they writhed about the window pane, a funeral pyre.

"God, what have I done!" As if the spark at once died, Mark stopped. His brain cleared and his eyes were no longer hot. The sight before him spelled the failure of his struggle. A moment more and he was charged with new current, a sane clear thinking current. Shielding his eyes from the heat, he slammed the window shut. The smoke choked him, but he only coughed and struggled to stamp out the fire. Suddenly he realized it was a useless battle, and he opened the door and fell.

Scott, his face a leaden bulk, huge and powerful, stood facing him. "Mark, are you all right? Here, you must get up and out of here!" Grasping Mark about the waist with an arm like steel, he forced him from the burning chaos.

"It's all over, Scott, I'm sane!" Mark's voice rang out. "Let me stay—I've got to help. Look at me, pal, can't you see I'm sane?" Straining every muscle, he released himself, and Scott did not stop him, but instead raced toward the burning room, shouting, "The gang on first landing! The fire extinguishers! There are three on this floor!"

That night, like others, could not endure forever. The daylight came, revealing charred ruins of one wing of the hospital, black and gaunt against the green magnolia trees. The damage was not great. Two patients quartered in the wing had managed to escape, because Mark risked his life for them. He had offered all he had to give in compensation for his awful crime, and his life, too, had been preserved. Now, Scott and he sat in a strange new room, watching the world awaken, as soft and lovely as it had been yesterday, unchanged. Mark was changed, though—he had lost his demon. He was free, yet who beside himself, would

know it? He turned and gazed at his friend. Scott knew.

Scott turned to him suddenly. "Mark, look here!" Eagerly Mark turned to see an inch before his eyes a burning match. Unflinchingly he regarded the fire and then, with victory shining in his eyes, he blew it out.

With the dead match held taut in his hand, Scott spoke. "Mark, a short circuited wire started the fire last night."

EUPHYSIOGRAM AND PERIPATETICS

Elisabeth Burger '35

EUPHYSIOGRAM

Kaleidoscopic ink breaks effervescently
on purple-fountained beaches of
driven I want expiation Greeks are
hypoyhecations for green-eyed goddesses
overperennial, perfuse, placid.
plasticity if quadrate pens
are redeemed for a pristine thrift
Why is a green blackberry red when
criticism is
useless if every spectator is a
plotter how do violins play
which siamese twins is incongruity
a differentiation of subtility shows
great green hills of adolescent future
decay means soullessness in sophistication
I adore if somnambulate flowers
scream red marjoram to heathen
hectograph I am not using a
dictionary

PERIPATETICS

A MAUVE, ASHES OF ROSES, sunset is blowing through my half-shut window. Why aren't the flies black instead of dark gun-metal? The study of bird life is called ornithology. I am not pretty. I wish I were shorter. Carter's ink is bought in the "five-and-ten." Why don't Herald cigarettes get wet? My ash trays should be emptied. A philosopher is a true artist. This is a hard task, for my mind

will not work in such surroundings and under such conditions. I was not born to force my pen. Beauty is an abstraction that differs with individual interpretation. I see things with halos of adjectives about them, surrounded, as it were, with auras of multiform and concrete colors. A pencil is mere olive, a cigarrette is flamboyant vermillion. Why do electric light bulbs use nitrogen vacuums inside? Wouldn't helium do as well? Helium is too expensive. A blotter works on the principle of capillary attraction. Poetry is a type of inferior music. Music can be played in colors without coarseness of concretizing the indescribable. It is an eternal conflict of mind that precluded all possibility of rest, and yet rest is the raison d'etre of every soul. Soul —have I one? If so, it is scarred with attempted evasions. My indolence likes to take orders but abhors the inevitable fulfillment of them. Am I a sceptic? I should say rather not, yet I refuse to admit a higher power than myself. Although I do not disbelieve in one. The borderline between maturity and adolescence of mental capacity is the most difficult and terror-filled spot in the world. When a person has no ambition, that person's dead. "I am aware of a sort of punishment in reading Proust." I feel that I should, and yet I can gain nothing from him. He is beyond realism in a world of his own to which I have no key. I am becoming tired of this scheme of writing. I do not approve of it since it is impossible to reproduce one's thoughts exactly. My pen guides me, and not I my pen. I cannot dictate my thoughts. I am not an automaton.

This is attempted Surrealisme.

DIARY

Martha Storek '37

I, TOO, HAVE ONE OF those serious records of life. Mine is smallish with round corners—bright red covers—and a pretty gold lock. A lock which I never lock, because I am afraid that I shall lose the key; it is only a very small, thin key. If I lose the key I shall never be able to read the bits of my daily life of yesterday and before then. But—I really need not fret about the key; it is already lost. I know it must be, for I have looked for it in its usual cluttered hiding-place and it is not there. Anything that is not where I put it last, is lost to me. So the key is lost, but the golden lock is open. I do believe the lock to be of plain brass, but the word 'golden' seems to sound grander and far more interesting.

Of all the diaries ever written I suppose that of Mr. Samuel Pepys was the best. Eight days ago I saw bits of paragraphs of his daily life. They were written in a curious, unbending kind of shorthand manner. Mr. Pepys, himself was not of an unbending nature except when he argued with his King about new ships for the English navy. Mr. Pepys, I'm sure, was jolly and happy—possessed of a kindly observing eye. He writes, so the inscription under the paragraphs reads, of a dainty ankle—of a tasty apple stew, and of a pretty bit of lace for a neck-ruff. He writes of much else, far more ideal and gratifying—as say the critics. I should like some day to read more of this curious Mr. Pepys. I wonder whether or no he ever read to himself from out of his diary. Perhaps he didn't. And if he did —I wonder—did he do it when the rooms were still, and the family had gone calling. Or did he save it until the dark night hours. And did he, do you suppose, write in it all his true thoughts, his sincere thoughts of folk, of things,

and of himself? I rather think that he was too great a nature to do the first, and too truthful not to do the second.

But I am neither great nor too truthful and so I read to myself what myself has been and done last year, and smile to myself when I observe how myself has grown up in this situation, and stayed the same in the other. I read it on days when I have much work to do but have not the mood, and when I am satisfied that I am the only being within many feet of my room. It has happened that some one has surprised me in my secret reading. I look very guilty and can't at all remember what it is one says in such a situation. I only look more and more guilty, until my guests feel it their duty to begin searching for the mangled corpse under the bed or the bloody weapon in the clothes-closet. This guilt, I say, comes of this, that a diary is, in the last analysis, a brief confession of one's lives; it is a revelation of the individual within one. The being which my closest friend may never know. To be found out is the primary fear of everyone of us, to be seen unclothed, as it were, without our feathers and gay trappings—that brings a look of guilt, a face of shame. Partly because of this fear I have almost never revealed the inner me in that book. I have a childish belief that some day again some one will find that book and will read in it—and, among many things, I abhor chiefly to hurt the inner feelings and judgments of those who know me. You may smile, but I have become wiser in the matter of always putting my true thoughts in ink.

For once—two years ago last Spring to be exact—I hate exactness but it is a commendable quality at times—the quiet pleasant life in our home was completely shattered by the presence of one—George John the Third—the ten year old favorite grandson of my very dearest great-aunt. The tragedy was in this, that great-aunt was also spending

a holiday with us at that time. My affection for her was such that I could not bring myself to express in words or actions my thoughts concerning the young child. I confided in my diary silently but satisfyingly. A good half-year later my great-aunt was again with us, but without the grandson. She saw my diary and expressed a kindly interest in so praiseworthy a thing, asking if she might be permitted to read a few pages of it. My mind does not remember happenings very long after they have happened; I had all but forgotten the unhappy visit of almost a year ago. I had no qualms in giving her the book. I do remember that I gave it to her with a wide smile and a magnanimous gesture —that is the word, I believe, that expresses it. Unfortunately my great-aunt opened to the pages of two years ago last Spring. She read with increasing alarm and rising blood-pressure of the ghastly, murderous, damning words written by me concerning the character and general bearing of George John the Third. I had even had the temerity to describe him as a long-legged viper of a rare species with the ears of a jack-rabbit and the forehead of a gorilla. Not being of a morbid nature, I shall say no more of the incident, only this—that I have learned one is never safe. No! Not even in one's own diary!

Such thoughts, however terrible they may seem when discovered, are not as humiliating as the thoughts written in times of genuine feeling, when one allows the primal sentiments to declare themselves.

And so—I shall write on in my diary. I don't write in it faithfully; the many blank pages testify to this. But some day I shall write what my true thoughts are—and, like Mr. Pepys, I shall fool the curious reader, for all my thoughts shall be written in a queer kind of short-hand with only real numbers for days.

BELOVED

Margaret Thoman '36

JOHN STOOD BACK AND looked at the Christmas tree. It seemed small and unwanted against the plain wall of the old New England house, but its cheery lights warmed his heart, enhancing that other feeling that had been there for so many years. This evening, Christmas Eve, was the happiest of his life. For one thing, he could not remember when they had last had a Christmas tree in the house, perhaps the year before his mother died, but they had had many things to brighten the stern home then. Since her death, he and his father had lived in straight-laced solitude, unkown to others and to each other, far apart in years and thoughts, yet bound together by some family fondness, probably a sense of the devotion fostered by that dead wife and mother. John thought of his father with some tenderness, and since his youth had said to himself, "I can't leave Father now that Mother is dead". He had felt so sure of this, almost reveling in the martyrdom of a son's duty, when he was young. But lately it had been different. Lately? Why for five years anyway; at least for five years he had had this other feeling in his heart, so strong and all-enveloping that he had had constant struggle to hide it. It had been surely five years since he had first known how completely in his blood she was—Alice—Alice, beloved. He turned to look at her, feeling as always the momentary guilt before the suffusion of ecstacy in her presence.

She had sat down in a large chair away from the tree, her doll-like face turned up to the star he had just put on the tip, her fingers crossed beneath her chin like a white tower. It was so strange to see her there, she had never been in the house before; she had never been so close before except when they had walked to school as children; he had never

dared to ask her to come for fear that his father would disapprove of a woman in the house, and for fear that he would show his own feelings before the time when he would be free to do so. And today, she had come by herself, asking if she could help with their Christmas tree. What had made her think of them? He wondered if she talked to his father while he had gone hurriedly to get the tree, trying to make his purchase seem planned, seem as though they always had had a tree at Christmas. He hoped that his father had liked her, he did not think they had ever been more than acquaintances, and this unexpected visit might have annoyed the old man. Had he actually heard them laughing as he had come in?

If Alice and his father were congenial, he might be able to declare what was in his heart—ask her—God, he had loved her for years, why shouldn't he ask her now, why not walk over and take her white hands from beneath her chin? No, his father had come back into the room and was talking. What was he saying?

"Alice," (how sweet the name sounded) "will you stay for tea?"

Alice lifted her head, "Why, yes, I'd love to." How strange, she was thinking, I expected them both to be cross; I've lived across the street for years but I have never really known either the old man or the son. They have both seemed so lonely; I never dreamed that they'd welcome my plan to cheer their Christmas and now they both are smiling —they look almost human when they smile. In the many times that I have met and spoken to them on the street, I have thought them cold, rigid as their old house.

Darling—John was thinking—could you know how I feel? Could you ever have guessed in the many times that I have pressed your hand on the street and tried to pass on without letting you see my eyes?

They sat there, the father and his son, talking to her, watching her mouth as she spoke, her hands as she poured the tea. Graciously, she passed the cup to the father, smiling at him. He took it slowly, touching her hand by accident as the cup passed from her fingers to his, then drawing away so quickly that the tea spilled. How clumsy, John thought, and he's making it worse by blushing. What's the trouble with him? John tried to pass it off by calling Alice's attention to one of the lights on the tree which threw a shadow on the wall. When he turned back his father had recovered his composure, and entered into the conversation, telling Alice how sweet she had been to come over. He really likes her, why haven't I tried to bring them together before? What a fool I was to think anyone could help but like her? Look at the way she responds, her eyes, her hair, could I ever awaken her heart? Father is actually asking for another cup of tea, he hasn't had two cups of tea for years—Look at her darling head bent over the teapot. Father, can't you see how lovely she is?—Father look at her —that's right—No!—No! not like that!—My God, father, don't look at her like that, she's mine——

"Father!" he screamed, and jumped to his feet. The Christmas tree and the high walls revolved in ghastly circles, always with Alice's startled eyes returning and returning in the fugue. Only for a minute, then he put his hand to his head and sank back into his chair. "Sorry," he mumbled, "I thought the tree was falling."

"You startled me," said Alice, her face relaxing, and her hand once more on the teapot. How queer, she thought, I was afraid for a minute that he would jump at the old man, and just because of a silly tree. How odd they are, both of them; look at the old man shaking; they have lived too long alone. "I must go now," she said, rising quietly, her thoughts already detached from these two.

* * * *

She was gone. John turned from the door and leaned against it for a second of farewell. He could not stand the house with its heavy atmosphere crushing the small remaining breath of her, the last fragment of his life. He ran quickly through the hall and out the back door to the garage. To drive and drive was his only thought. But after driving, what?—Tomorrow and tomorrow, what? He had loved as a silent man must love, with his whole being. Why try to face it?—there was a rope and a beam—it had been done before—what man could have had more reason?—

* * * *

His father saw the hanging shadow later that night, the shadow of his son. He cut the body down and carried it into the house, laid it down before the Christmas tree. "The tree didn't fall, Son," he kept repeating, sobbing over the still face, "It didn't fall. Why did you do it? Why?"

There was no one for the old man to turn to. Alice? His love for her had died with his son, and strangely like the boy, in the greatness of his grief, he wanted to drive, far away from the lifeless body beneath the lighted tree.

He sped the car along the straight road by the sea, thinking back, trying to draw something tangible from that muddle of emotions. And then he understood, understood suddenly and cruelly clear. It would have been kinder if he had run off the road before he understood.

* * * *

"A queer pair," said Alice, looking across at the cold house.

THISTLE

Marian Zabriskie '37

ONE DAY I SAW a purple thistle growing by a gray-green garden wall. She stood alone, sulking, for all the other flowers avoided her, knowing that she would bruise their petals. She was like a great horned toad, defiant and saying, "I won't!"

I accepted her challenge. "But you will, impertinent thistle! You are only a spoiled and saucy child."

And so I plucked her and carried her home. I put her in a Chinese vase upon my marble mantle. A Louis Quatorze mirror hung behind her.

"Quite an effective picture," thought I as I stepped back.

Two thistles I beheld, screaming at me, "I won't! I won't!" Sucking my sore and bleeding fingers, I knew they wouldn't, and I ceded to them the victory.

TO —

Margaret Waterman '36

My love is like a saraband,
With stately foot, light-treading:
Calm dignity to woo my hand,
Proud conquest in me wedding.

TWO DEBUTS

Frances Wheeler '37

HER HAND SLIPPED IN; her hand slipped out. Her hand slipped . . Her lips parted; her lips closed. Her lips . . . Her mouth smiled; her mouth relaxed. Her . . .

It was agony for me to watch and want escape for her. Could nobody snatch this debutante out of the receiving line? The procession of people was endless—and as long as another person stepped forward, she must continue this meeting, greeting of society. "How can her feet and her hands ever last through the interminable introduction?" moaned a sympathetic voice somewhere near my ear. But I was worried about what would last and what was dying.

This girl, striking in shrill green tulle, in a ballroom banked with flowers, was, by her regular, repeated actions, doing this thing over and over again precisely, automatically, training herself to remember names and faces, names as faces, faces as names. That is what was to me so pathetic —she was teaching herself what to remember. Would she any longer be able to get at the heart, the reality of these people she was indifferently smiling at? Now, she received only their congratulations, their felicitations. When these were not poured onto her, I wondered whether she'd be sensitive enough after this severe strain to receive anything else from the people about her.

For a very long time I've been anxious to discover how you get to know people, their actualities and their personalities. For lack of any formula I too have expressed indifference by smiling, by muttering "How do you do," and by flexing my wrist a trifle. And I've been baffled and panic-stricken as people threw back my indifference and

passed on to something more nourishing. So I knew this was not the way.

This debutante used to think as I do—that, as we milled among masses of people at teas, at balls, it was the things that we remembered unconsciously about persons that were important, not what we had planned beforehand or set aside to imprint on our minds. And thus, perhaps we connected a figure with an action that had life in it, some random sentence picked up above the drone of conversation that was impulsive, some facial movement besides a smile, not just a name and a set mouth.

This way we had lots of fun. We rarely remembered that same thing about anyone. But it had its drawbacks. We couldn't talk to other people about them for we couldn't apply a name. It frustrated others, our mothers, for instance, since we could not tell them who we'd met unless the name would stick as something significant or genuine. They weren't reliable, these helter-skelter impressions except for ourselves—certainly not dependable for a girl who is being introduced to society. I turned away to dance. It was pathetic, her ambition to learn society's precepts.

As we swirled in the deep tide of dancers someone mentioned exams. And I thought how soon I would be back at school and be faced by them. All fall I had taken the easy way, not consciously making an effort to remember any special circumstance or fact. What impressed me, I absorbed. The rest I would not retain. But I knew that these inevitable things that I couldn't help but learn while important to me were not always so ranked on the scale of education.

And so I shuddered to think of exams. They would mean a forced, compulsory strain on my senses to remember what I ought to, what was prescribed to be gained

from a course. During the period I would feel a sickness of frustration, a futility, knowing that these things I was compelling on my memory would not last after exams were over, that they were just of the moment and not of eternal stuff.

Then too am I haunted by a dread of seeing something dying, the thought that perhaps with enough of this memorizing, this mimicry, my innate impressionability would be dead, devoid of sensitivity. I am afraid that soon I will have to be told what to remember and what to forget. And I fear that exams eventually will be the death weapon—my debut.

TO E. M.

Margaret Waterman '36

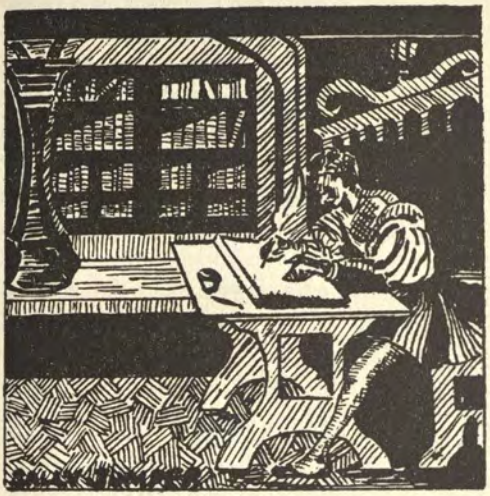
In dreams' soft fancy, Love, lie sleeping,
Dreams' deep rest thy body steeping.
Slumb'ring so, think not of me,
Warming sleep o'er thee still creeping.

Stand I so beside his bed,
Stroking cool his sleep-flushed head.
Waking, light, he yet shall find me—
Constancy, whom he has wed.

IN A DAKOTA FIELD

Margaret Thoman '36

Your back so bent with years of patient toil,
And on your face the threads of other years
When fields have prospered, rain and richness of the soil
Bringing crops of corn in fully measured ears.
Now impotent your prayers to save the grain,
Your watchful hands about their hopeless task:
The selfish rain gods hoard their store of rain
With no attempts to proffer what you ask.
I cannot sway the gods, Dakota, but my hand
Of human flesh can help,—Yet when I say,
"Will you not rest?"—how quick you are to stand,
Distrustful of mankind, and go upon your way.



BOOKS
OLD and NEW

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S ROOM OF HER OWN

Frances Walker '38

It does not stir that warm feeling of pride when we are forced to admit that our contemporary fiction is not the product of a fertile era. We look around rather wildly, hoping to see some writer in all that maze of scribblers to whom we can point and say, "There, he is, the spokesman of our generation, and it is he whom all the others imitate." We mention Joyce, Proust, Mrs. Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, but there is a question in our tone. We cannot say their names with the conviction that other generations could say Jane Austen and Scott, or Dickens and Thackeray. We are not sure of what our authors are doing; they are behaving very differently from the others who gained a lasting reputation with their pens. They are experimenting outside of the conventional realm of the novel. Not satisfied by the traditional method of 'expression', they have broken rules of punctuation, disputed accepted types of subject matter, and completely upset the general effect of prose in search of the novel that will sound most like the voice of the present generation. It is natural and logical that the experimenters in fiction should assume the responsibility of finding the most fitting method of expressing their times. But today their search seems

more frantic and their results more extreme than is usual in a transitional period, because they are sounding the high-pitched, uncertain tone of life in a hectic, post-war era. We cannot deny, however, their valiant effort, nor refuse to recognize the measure of success that is inevitable with the exercise of such talents as those of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. They have found that the old conventions do not work and now they are facing squarely the problem of finding new ones. There is no cooperation in the search of these contemporary writers; each preserves his own independence of ideas and theories. It is the critical reader who classifies and groups them together because of an apparent similarity in their aspirations and technique. Some have broken sharply with the old conventions intending definitely not to be influenced by them; others have employed their originality freely, but with respectful consideration for the traditions of the past.

Mrs. Woolf is probably the best example of the latter group. Her work is marked by certain theories she has evolved from a penetrating study of renowned literary personalities. The one thing that she has come to value above all else in the subject matter of her novels is "human beings as a whole and as wholes." This, she claims, is the "permanent material of fiction and it is only the method of presentation that changes." That Mrs. Woolf has made extraordinary changes in presenting her human beings is characteristic of her originality. She published one book, titled *Orlando,* and called it a biography, but its theme is so unusual, so complete a departure from the accepted style of biography-writing, that many readers have seen fit to classify it as a novel. Actually, it was Virginia Woolf's method of proving another theory which she entertains: everything we have today, our accomplishments, our hopes, our memories, are all conditioned and governed by what has occured in time gone by. Orlando, born a boy in the sixteenth century, has a life experience which closely parallels the various stages of literature through three centuries until, strangely enough, he is a woman thirty-five years old living in the twentieth century. This versatile hero-heroine was drawn from the family history of V. Sackville West, and the book he dominates is clearly a biography in spite of its simplified character who demonstrates so conclusively that "the present is the sum of all the past". When we read these writings of Virginia Woolf, which reveal casually ideas that must have been drawn from hours of research into outworn conventions, we realize

she could never make the definite break that Joyce and Proust have made, even though her work places her name with theirs.

When the World War upset trains of thought in politics, foreign relations and peace, it did not step aside for literature to proceed unaffected. As little as eight years ago the *Review of Reviews*, expressing the cry of the reading public, complained that "the most profound thoughts and feelings of a changed world are left unsaid for lack of means to say them". And the only remedy they could offer was a new type of novel; one that "will stand at a distance and see the form rather than the detail . . . that will show human beings in relation to one another and yet not forget that a large part of life is made up of our reactions to general ideas and our thoughts when we are alone". It is fortunate, then, that in this age of higher education and broadening fields of science, the art of fiction, too, has become more intellectual. The sort of emotional complexities that the author gloried in fifty years ago now torment his mind with series of questions. Mrs. Woolf has her questions, and she confronts them in each new book. They are concerned with expressing the 'profound thoughts and feelings of a changed world', and by stretching the novel into a new prose form she is seeking a flexible and fearless means of saying them.

Being an essentially intellectual person, Mrs. Woolf's mind in particular lies behind everything she does. She believes that "to capture the inner life of human beings presents a different problem to each generation of novelists", and it is probably this theory which explains the fascination she finds in the actual working of a brain. All the drama, all the action of her novels takes place in the minds of her characters. No other author can convey so successfully the veritable process of thinking. But that does not mean she bores her reader with rational processes of academic thought; to the contrary, she captivates us with sudden impressions, fleeting memories, and changeable mental moods that vitalize her characters. She 'stands at a distance and sees the form rather than the detail'. Her conception of 'form' is apprehension: the first sight of appearances that break over the character and the reader after struggling through the darkness that obscures the minds of men. She has assimilated into her art all that modern psychology has to offer. She never jars our sensibilities by describing a mental experience that seems impossible or is illogical. She constructs her books around the psy-

chological knowledge of our generation, which accounts largely for the amazing strength of her writing and the sureness of her touch on life.

If we should set ourselves to the task of observing our friends about us and accounting for their external actions by our limited understanding of human nature, we would be first perplexed and then hopelessly confused. People complicate and mask the inner truth with trivial speech and inexplicable behavior to such an extent that we could do nothing but give up with one sage conclusion:—it is impossible to make definite generalizations about human nature. Mrs. Woolf detaches herself in order to observe the reactions of her characters 'to one another and to thoughts when they are alone', and she takes the reader with her. We watch their moods change under the effect of conflicting impulses and unexpected influences recurring from the past. Moreover, we approve of what we see, in spite of our astonishment at realizing that she, too, has been faced with the problem, "What do we know of other people?" Mrs. Woolf has, in remarkable combination with her intellect, an imagination that can sink her into the mind of a human being and discover there the little illusions and visions and images that are kept secret from the ordinary observer. These are the concealed corners that she reveals to create the romance in her novels, that satisfy our cravings to gain an intimate knowledge of other people. In her essay on *Modern Fiction* she expresses her striving with the rhetorical question, "Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and circumscribed spirit of Life, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?"

There is one thing, however, that, in building up a character, relates Mrs. Woolf with the past rather than the modern tradition. Her fresh and intense awareness of thoughts and feelings are associated with Joyce and Proust, but her consciousness of well-being and culture, and the closely confined scene of each novel suggests Jane Austen and Scott. Her charaters have always lived secluded, sheltered lives, nourished by a proud realization of background. Mrs. Ramsay, who predominates in *To The Lighthouse* with an instinctive understanding of human emotions in spite of an innocence of the world's greatest sorrows, is typical of the Jane Austenish aroma about Mrs. Woolf. It is only the stress that she puts on the characters of her

novels, bringing her to eliminate the obvious plot of the Dickens and Austen traditions, that saves her modern spirit from hindrance by too close a relationship with outworn conventions.

Without a tight series of cooperative incidents it may be debatable whether or not we can apply the word 'novelist' to Virginia Woolf at all. But actually there is enough of the story implicit in her writing to establish an easy coming and going between her mind and the world she creates for the reader. Mrs. Woolf has no need to stir us with her plot since she moves us to the limit of our sensibilities by her art. Her style of writing might be compared to French Impressionistic painting. It has that same "passion for the beauty of life, loved for its own sake". She chooses her words carefully and uses them as delicately as the artist his paints. With her implements of writing she portrays the same touches and divisions of tones that an artist creates with shapes and colors. *Jacob's Room* was written in the height of her impressionistic style. There, through fragmentary revelations and glances at other people's reactions to him, she gradually builds up a hero whose portrait is not complete until she has finished with her last glimpse. There is a breathlessness and uncertainty in *Jacob's Room* that is disturbing because it can only be beautiful in momentary snatches. Its lack of confidence, of full conviction in a new idea betrays it as an experiment in fiction. In *Mrs. Dalloway,* however, Virginia Woolf is surer of herself and of the effectiveness she wants in her style. She has used 'tones' to soften the startling quality, the abrupt omissions of transitions that is characteristic of impressionism. Her style is 'cultivated', the direct expression of a finely educated mind. She uses words that affect the understanding rather than the senses. Her prose, profiting from the experiments made with free verse, has the rhythm of exquisitely graded poetry. It has become in itself a vehicle for poetry with its daring and fullness of metaphors and similes. Her painter-like vision is the essence of this poetic prose, for it can capture a vibrant image with the simplest and coolest of words.

> There was the silent apparition of an ashen-colored ship, come, gone; there was the purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath.

Mrs. Woolf has emancipated her writing from the unnatural yoke of classical construction. She is not afraid to adapt punctuation

to her own use. It is as much an implement of modern expression as words. The stream of thought that prompts a sentence is the criterion for its semi-colons, commas or incomplete form. The following bit, chosen at random from *To The Lighthouse,* is typical and clarifying.

> She felt rather inclined just for a moment to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing; the thing that mattered; to detach it; separate it off; clean it of all emotions and odds and ends of things, and so hold it before her, and bring it to the tribunal where, ranged about in conclave, sat judges she had set up to decide these things.

The whole of Mrs. Woolf's mind, as well as being behind her novels, is expressed in everything she writes. She herself has stated that "a writer's life influences his book to such an extent that the best understanding comes through a familiarity with the author". As we read through her fiction we feel our acquaintance with her progressing to an intimacy, and we come to recognize certain symbols that are the fabric of her writing. Each of her novels from the first one, *The Voyage Out,* to its logical conclusion, *The Waves,* has some connection with the sea, either in the background or in a character's memory. Waves represent the moving of Time, which is a complexity to which she is ever struggling to do justice. She would eliminate, as far as possible, the conditions of Time that regulate the reader's daily life and recognize its varying influences as an explanation of the inconsistencies of a personality. There are also other symbols that we learn to distinguish—the Lighthouse which represents unattained perfection; her concern over the fundamental ambiguity of life, that is, the juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic—but we must not go into a detailed analysis of them, for they are best understood when seen as an integral part of her fiction. Mrs. Woolf never explains or reminds us of these symbols; she leaves them to recur and to be recognized. It is this absence of explanation, permitting the pleasure of personal discovery, that is one of the secrets of her charm for us. There is another secret, too, that lies in the close relationship of her individual opinions and trains of thought with what she writes. She has a faculty for

expressing in the words on her printed page ideas that we have long floundered with, and have never been able to say coherently.

Six years after the *Review of Reviews* laid down its stipulations for the new type of novel, Virginia Woolf published *The Waves*, her finally perfected medium for capturing the inner life of human beings which she sees, and sees acutely. Putting away all hesitation, she deals directly here with the immediate and essential truths of experience sustaining them with the music of poetry. Mrs. Woolf has given us a new kind of novel with which to sound the voice of this generation that has become intellectually conscious of psychology.

"A SHROPSHIRE LAD"

A. E. Housman

OXFORD $1.25

"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow."

"A Shropshire Lad" is a slim book of verse meant to be read in the spring and early summer while the greens of grass and leaf still command us to stop and stare in wonder at their new, clean beauty. It should be read when fruit orchards are in blossom or at least when the vision of them is fresh in our minds. For if we read "Lovliest of trees, the cherry now——" without the physical presence of such loveliness, we shall be filled with unbearable nostalgia.

"A Shropshire Lad" is the essence of youth that has warred, but which remains undefeated, and love that has suffered but has not grown bitter. The joys which Housman expresses are exuberant without being frenzied—the sorrows are poignant without being pessimistic. This man alone has the faculty of making his poetry light and buoyant but never smacking of triviality. The wonders of nature and the true mirth of youth lend sweetness to the deepest remorse. By this I do not mean that a "Pollyanna" spirit pervades the book, nor does maudlin sentimentality enter its pages. Rather,

there is an earth-deep love for life that no sorrow of the world can entirely quench.

> "If it chance your eye offend you,
> Pluck it out, lad, and be sound:
> 'T will hurt, but here are salves to friend you,
> And many a balsam grows on ground."

We find a bit of cynicism concerning love and its changing nature. However, the fact is never deplored, but accepted as the changing seasons are accepted.

We who steep our lives in current sophistication shall find when we read "A Shropshire Lad" that a love for simplicity still exists within us, and we rejoice in its existence. I for one shall always own a copy of the book to insure its permanence. Better still, I shall learn my favorite verses by heart.

M. Z. '37

"NOT BUILT WITH HANDS"

Helen C. White

THE MACMILLAN CO., $2.50

An eleventh century Joan of Arc is envisioned by the author in this tale of a Countess of Tuscany. But this maiden leads armies to victory for the cause of Christianity and peace rather than for any one nation. The scope of this book is no simple historical romance, but typifies in the segment of this girl's life the struggle between the Church and the State, law and might, civilization and barbarism.

From Countess Mathilda's first thrill in saving the ancient civilization of Rome from Norman barbarism by her military prowess, her ambition develops into a devotion to the wider interest in the contentment of her Tuscan people. But with Pope Gregory VII in need of support to insure the supremacy of the Church, Mathilda pays as the price for championing the cross, near dissolution of her own realm and loss of fealty of her vassals. The famous scene of Canossa finds Mathilda playing the laborious role of conciliator between the Pope and the excommunicate King. After recovering her

lands and people from ruin and dissension, she later goes to the rescue of the exiled Gregory only to learn of his death. Her hopes and plans made pulp of, she finally realizes the virtue of persistence and patriotism which she finds in her peasants who are dragged along, powerless to probe the uncertainty of her future.

The book has all of the color, the majesty, and the vagueness of pageantry. Despite its richness of detail and beauty of description, the tapestry is not clearly enough woven for the reader to discriminate the large threads of the story from the small, or to make the characters essentially life-like. The pictures of feudal strongholds in their glory, the chapels and monasteries in their sobriety are well defined but tend to be crowded with non-essentials. The events of battle, the holy synods, Mathilda's many travels on horse back over mountain and plain are of such extent that the narrative should run swiftly. But they rather are so numerous as to lead to plodding confusion for the reader. Each one, though fraught with enough interest of novelty to make a story in itself, when amassed with the others makes for a loosely-forged chain because emphasis is not given to the dominant trends. Places are not set apart in large enough scale to give the background that such a lengthy novel afforded. Rome is little more than the naming of a goal.

The treatment of the dominant characters perhaps makes up for the lack of lucidity elsewhere. The beautiful and inspired Mathilda is conceived in noble dimensions of spirit and deed. But while imbued with humanity she seems to one of this day, superhuman, scarcely feeling, apparently, the death of her child, the desertion of her husband. The Pope, however, loses none of his dignity though the reader glimpses him intimately as the fatherly friend of the Countess. But again, the author includes, I think, too many abbots and churchmen to have them stand out clearly as separate entities. More economy and weighing of details would make the whole a more unified and impressive book.

One does not, however, begrudge Miss White words. She offers that luxuriance of language that makes diffuse reading a pleasure. To me, her wielding of her broad vocabulary is too graceful, not apart from her subject. But it gives new freshness and vitality to periods meagerly treated in literature. She is poetical and

eloquent, fitting to the devotional quality of her story. The task of recreating ancient epochs challenges the scholar, the artist, and the novelist, and this author has met this three-fold task.

F. W. '36

DANTE VIVO

Giovanni Papini

MACMILLAN $2.50

Because we are prone to look skeptically at any evaluation of genius, it is not without some prejudice, or suspicion, perhaps, that we read Giovanni Papini's *Dante Vivo*. Obviously Papini has attempted a revaluation of Dante Aleghieri, but he has forced not as a suggestion but as an absolute. It is true that the author has made certain modest qualifications such as "as I see it" but the intensity of his conviction far overpowers the rather meager attempt to qualify.

Unfortunately a considerable portion of the man Papini intrudes itself into this book, coloring, rather distastefully, the genius of Dante. In the introduction we read:

"It is above all the book of an artist about an artist, of a Catholic about a Catholic, of a Florentine about a Florentine." This is true. We might unkindly question the first of the statement but we cannot deny the rest. Though we must recognize the remarkable name which Papini has made, despite the praise that both Bergson and William James had for him, it is still permissible to question his ability in judging a Dante.

If we were to draw the essence of the book into a few phrases, we might say that Dante is an example of one who was extremely proud and thus fought against mediocrity, and one who sublimated an excessively sensual nature. Papini is not so blatant. He entwines something like this about the attempt at psychoanalysis.

"Everyone sees you, dear Dante, dressed in your close, long tunic, passing with austere face among your fellowmen without even vouchsafing them a single glance, always absorbed in thoughts loftier than the towers or the clouds."

The criticism of the *Divine Comedy* itself, contains little that is more enlightening. If it is true that there is nothing new under

the sun it is certainly also true that there are some things less worn than others. It is scarcely necessary to suggest that the genius of Dante was capable of lofty thoughts. We get some glimpse, it would seem, in the *Divine Comedy*. But then, Papini adds, "But no one will ever make me believe—me an Italian, a Tuscon, a Florentine—that you always displayed that forbidding visage of solemn abstraction." Yes we should judge that the lover of Beatrice could stoop to a smile but we judge this, though we are not an Italian, a Tuscon, and a Florentine.

But we shall be accused of unthinking prejudice. Perhaps unwittingly we have permitted Papini's temperament to destroy our perspective of the book. And yet the constant assertion of the author's personality makes us suspect interpretation. Giovanni Papini has obviously identified himself with his superb countryman. He has read into the art which grew out of Italy and into Catholicism a likeness to his own art born of the same origin.

But does not the poet Dante transcend this? Papini would unquestionably agree that it does. It is not a willful subjectivity that the author betrays. But it is subjectivity and an inordinate amount of it.

Perhaps the very qualities that Papini has thought necessary for a complete understanding of Dante have been those that have been least desirable. It is certain that he has been moved emotionally by the poet, but it is not certain that he has been moved intellectually. And yet Dante dealt in ultimates. Whether we agree with Catholicism or not (and Papini says those "wise ones" who think it no longer a significant part of modern culture should be left "to wade in the stream until the moment fast approaches when they drown") Dante has not left this question unanswered. He has attempted an answer—that the limit of man's contribution—and he has completed it. He has been intellectually vigorous. This Papini is to only a degree cognizant. And is he aware of the fire that emanated from the spiritual in Dante that was to create the magnificence that was the *Divine Comedy*? Perhaps Dante was not a Saint. It is of little significance. But the passion for purity, the

passion for infinite vision was abundantly present. If he was not a saint, he was more than one.

Is it that the translation is poor? How else can we reconcile "deign" and "rhymed verses". This is the *Divine Comedy* of which you speak, Giovanni Papini, the *Divine Comedy*.

E. B. '35

ADVERTISEMENTS